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## I 'm proud to be an Independent Duty Corpsman

Filed under CORPSMAN, FLEET AND THE FLEET MARINE FORCE, LEADERSHIP (ONE COMMENT)

**By Chief Hospital Corpsman (EXW) Travis Harmon, Navy Medicine Education & Training Command**



Surface Force Independent Duty Corpsman Class #07010-25

***I say “We”, however, this is my own perspective of what an IDC is.***

IDCs are a small community of highly skilled medical practitioners trained to operate in the most arduous environments.

On any given day we are solely responsible for the health and well being of an entire shipboard crew, submarine crew, Marine Corps platoon, SEAL troop, or various other operational commands and shore-based facilities.

We often have strong type “A” personalities and are outgoing. We are spread thin across the Navy spectrum, of all races, genders,

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classes, ethnicity, sexual orientations and backgrounds, and we serve in all corners of the world.

Some IDCs ascend naturally out of a crowd, while others are recruited into the spotlight and assume a role that they would have never asked for. IDCs, and great IDCs in particular, all have a few things in common.

We lead from the front, never asking a teammate to carry out a task we are not willing to do or have not already done. As *John C. Maxwell*, an author whose work is among the Enlisted Professional Reading List, said, **“Leaders must be close enough to relate to others, but far enough ahead to motivate them.”**

Although we are all leaders, we are also followers. Some IDCs are the product of their own perseverance but most if not all befriend a Doctor, Physician Assistant or Senior IDC in order to develop their skills as a clinician.

We thrive outside of our comfort zone. We rely on each other, our experiences prior to earning the title of Independent Duty Corpsman, and our advanced medical training. The title of IDC does not accompany a medical degree or license to practice medicine. We are expected to do more with less.

IDCs have a passion for training our replacements. Employing our skill set and experience in mentoring and training junior Corpsman and non-medical personnel is one of the most important aspects of the job. Like I said before, we rely on our experiences as junior Corpsmen, and if we are not influencing our young Docs, we are failing the organization.



The love of my life, Jennifer, has been my foundation throughout my career. Without her support I would not be where I am today.

We fixate on doing the very best for our patients. Holding ourselves to the highest standard of patient care is how we operate. It's like chess; you think three moves ahead to ensure your patient receives the best care possible.

I 'm proud to be an Independent Duty Corpsman and blessed to have served amongst some truly exceptional Sailors, Marines, Soldiers and Airmen. In closing I would like to offer my story of becoming an IDC.

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I was born at Camp Lejeune Naval Hospital, Jacksonville, North Carolina, in 1979. Both my parents were Hospital Corpsmen, and my father was an Independent Duty Corpsman. I don't know if it was fate or simple coincidence, but the only job the Navy offered me was Corpsman. I had an overwhelming amount of pride when I returned home from the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) to report the news to my folks. Of course my father questioned my decision, making sure it was what I wanted.

3rd Battalion 8th Marines, Kilo Company, 2nd Platoon, FOB Gulistan, Farah Province, Afghanistan

Keeping the legacy alive, I joined the Navy in 1997, and attended Hospital Corps School following Boot Camp.

I have served with the Marines, Army, Air Force, Naval Special Warfare, and at clinics and Hospitals. I deployed with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit to the Mediterranean Sea; 3rd Battalion 8th Marines to Afghanistan; Joint Detention Facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; Combined Joint Special Operations Air Component Arabian Peninsula, Ballad Iraq; and SEAL Team THREE to various countries. Through all my travels, I've seen and treated a myriad of illnesses



My Father retired HMCM(SW) George Harmon and I at my CPO Pinning Ceremony, September 2013.

and injuries from routine sickbcall to malaria and extensive trauma. I had many mentors who helped me develop my career, but my father has always been my driving force and ultimately why I chose to become an IDC.

The love of my life, Jennifer, has been my foundation throughout my career. Without her support I would not be where I am today. In 2013 I was promoted to Chief Petty Officer, and God blessed us with our son, Cody James, on Christmas Eve. My father's drive is still with me, but now my family is the source of my fortitude.

I am currently assigned to Navy Medicine Education and Training Command in San Antonio, Texas, as Academic Oversight for Independent Duty Corpsman Curriculum. I would be honored to mentor any Corpsman aspiring to become an IDC.

I will leave you with one very important piece of advice. Whether aspiring to be an IDC, currently enrolled in IDC school, or actively functioning as an IDC, do not wait until your last tour to enroll in college. Get your education now! Although some colleges will accept credits from IDC school, your credentials as an unlicensed provider will not transfer to a civilian job unless you want to go back to sea with a merchant ship, or work off-shore on an oil rig.

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**Bry**

I retired in 2008, I was an IDC from 1997 until I retired. I enjoyed it a lot and it helped elevate me to levels I did not think I would achieve.

**HMCS(Retired) Bryan Walker**